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REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS OF LITERATURE

The Psychology of the Organized Group Game. MABEL JANE REANEY.
Monograph Supplement, The British Journal of Psychology, IV.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1916. Pp. 76.

An analysis of the psychological factors involved in the "organized group game" is made from (1) the purely psychological and philosophical and from (2) the experimental points of view. An extensive survey of the literature, including the many theories of play, is given and a comprehensive bibliography is appended. The writer concludes "that play is a universal phenomenon found amongst animals and man and that its complexity varies with the stage of development of the species and the individual; that the plays of children can be divided into definite periods which coincide with the periods of race development; that the play of animals and children makes use of instincts and by modifying them intelligently trains for the adult life; that the theories suggested account, respectively, for different types of play; that the earliest forms can be explained by the surplus energy theory, the later forms by the practise theory combined with the recapitulation theory and much of adult play by the recreation theory; that the traditional games of all countries have arisen as the results of the imitation of the serious occupations of the life of the period; . . . that the organized group game as the highest form of motor play represents the tribal stage of the race; . . . that the final development of the group game seems to have arisen as the accompaniment to civilization and has been evolved as a means of giving scope to those instinctive tendencies which are balked by such civilization; that the evolution of this kind of game appears in the race which has inherited from its forbears the instincts of rivalry and pugnacity to a marked degree."

As result of civilization there has been a dissociation of ideas and a definite group of ideas formed around the concept "group game." The fascination of the "organized group game" in modern times can be explained on the lines that it has been evolved to satisfy the balked dispositions of a warlike race under the conditions of civilization, and that the cult of "playing the game" has been established as a national habit of thought by suggestion resulting in "tradition."

In the experimental part of the research, a questionnaire was sent to 1,000 of the leading public and secondary schools in England. The questions asked were:

1. (a) Do you consider that any evidence exists to show that mental development takes place as a result of definite training in a group game, such as football, hockey, cricket, netball, *etc.*?

(b) If so can you quote a definite case?

2. (a) Do you consider that there is any relation between play ability and general ability?

(b) Do the boys and girls who excel in games show any tendency to be above or below the average standard of intelligence?

(c) Do those who show marked apathy towards, or fail to reach any standard of efficiency in them, tend to be above or below this average standard of intelligence?

3. Are you aware of any special mental characteristics which mark respectively: Part I.: The best football players, the best cricket players, the best hockey players, the best netball players, the best lacrosse players; Part II.: The boys and girls who show least aptitude for playing games?

4. What game do you consider most valuable from an educational point of view?

5. From your experience, would you say that there is any special age at which group games appeal most strongly?

6. Do you think the school games should be organized in the upper school by the children themselves, or by a teacher?

7. Do you consider that games should be compulsory?

Six hundred and thirty-nine answers were received from 487 schools. The general conclusions are: (1) There *is* definite evidence to show that mental development takes place as a result of training in group games. A sufficient number of definite cases can be quoted to prove the above statement. (2) There is a definite relation between play ability and general ability. Girls and boys who play games well are on the whole *above* the average intelligence, or of average intelligence, but seldom below it. Girls and boys who show marked apathy to games or play them badly are on the whole *below* average intelligence. (3) The following qualities are marked characteristics of the best players: Alertness, rapidity of thought and action, judgment, resourcefulness. Children who show little aptitude for games tend to be slow, dull, and slack. (4) Football is the game of greatest educational value for boys; hockey for girls. (5) The games appeal most strongly to boys above twelve years of age, and to girls above thirteen. (6) The consensus of opinion is in favor of organization by the children, under supervision. (7) Games should be compulsory.

In general the writer concludes that there is a correlation between general ability and play ability for group games. The questionnaire method has had adverse criticism, however.

EDITH F. MULHALL.

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